

Message Text

SECRET

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ORIGIN SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 R

DRAFTED BY ETH T.F.: MR COOTE:CHG

APPROVED BY AF - AMB. MULCAHY

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EUR/WE - MR MARSH (INFO)

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O 222132Z FEB 75

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

USMISSION NATO IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 040666

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, AEMR, ET, US

SUBJECT: ITALIAN CONCERN RE DETERIORATING SITUATION IN
ETHIOPIA

REF: ADDIS ABABA 2121

1. JUST PRIOR RECEIPT REFTEL ITALIAN AMBASSADOR ORTONA
ASKED URGENTLY TO SEE SISCO TODAY. HIS PRESENTATION RE
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POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENTS IN ETHIOPIA AND GOI ANXIETY RE
SITUATION THERE REFLECTED SAME GRAVE CONCERN REPORTED REFTEL

2. ORTONA SAID THAT DEVELOPMENTS IN ETHIOPIA WERE SOURCE OF GRAVE CONCERN TO GOI, PARTICULARLY IN THE LIGHT OF THE HEAVY FIGHTING THAT HAS BEEN TAKING PLACE IN RECENT WEEKS, AND EMERGENCE OF INDICATIONS THAT DERG WOULD NOT BE INCLINED, AT THIS STAGE, TO UNDERTAKE A DETERMINED EFFORT TOWARDS REACHING A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT ON ERITREA. GOI HAD RECEIVED INFORMATION FROM CONFIDENTIAL SOURCES IN ADDIS THAT MILITARY SITUATION IN ETHIOPIA COULD TAKE A SHARP TURN FOR THE WORSE WITH DIRE CONSEQUENCES FOR EVERYONE. ACCORDING TO HIS INFO, DERG HAD UNANIMOUSLY DECIDED NOT TO ACCEDE IN ANY WAY TO ERITREAN REQUESTS FOR INDEPENDENCE BUT TO PURSUE FULL-SCALE WAR AGAINST ERITREANS TO BRING THEM TO HEEL WHATEVER THE CONSEQUENCES, NOT EXCLUDING

WIDESPREAD DESTRUCTION AND EVEN SCORCHED-EARTH POLICY.

3. AS CONSEQUENCE, CONDITIONS IN ERITREA WOULD BECOME MUCH WORSE, WITH ETHIOPIAN MILITARY SHOWING LITTLE CONCERN FOR LOCAL AND FOREIGN CITIZENS IN AREA. ITALIANS WORRIED THAT WAVE OF XENOPHOBIA WILL SWEEP COUNTRY WHICH COULD RESULT IN DEATH AND DESTRUCTION THROUGHOUT ETHIOPIA. THERE ARE ABOUT 7,000 ITALIANS LIVING IN ADDIS ABABA, ORTONA SAID, WHO COULD BE AFFECTED BY ANY CHANGE IN SITUATION. WHILE ITALIANS HAD BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN GETTING THEIR PEOPLE OUT OF ASMARA, THEY NOT REPEAT NOT SURE WHETHER EVACUATION FROM ADDIS WOULD BE AS EASY.

4. GOI AWARE, ORTONA SAID, THAT US OFFICIALS WERE CURRENTLY CONSIDERING WHETHER TO GRANT ADDITIONAL MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO ETHIOPIA. USG HAD GREAT LEVERAGE ON ETHIOPIANS. GOI HOPED, THEREFORE, THAT IF DECISION MADE TO GIVE NEW AID TO TRY TO GET DIRG TO RESUME NEGOTIATIONS WITH ERITREANS FOR PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT, WE WOULD USE SUCH DECISION TO OBTAIN ASSURANCES FROM DIRG THAT FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS WILL BE RESPECTED, THAT XENOPHOBIC MANIFESTATIONS WILL NOT BE ENCOURAGED OR ALLOWED, & TO TRY TO GET DIRG TO RESUME NEGOTIATIONS WITH ERITREANS FOR PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT.

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5. SISCO EXPLAINED DELICACY OF SITUATION AND THAT USG TOO WAS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT SITUATION IN ETHIOPIA. ON ONE HAND, WE DO NOT WANT TO CREATE SITUATION WHERE EPMG FEELS USG IS NOT RESPONSIVE; AND ON OTHER HAND WE DO NOT WANT TO BE INVOLVED IN MIDDLE OF CIVIL WAR. SISCO STATED THAT IT WAS OUR PRESENT JUDGMENT THAT THERE LIKELY TO BE EXTENDED PERIOD OF INCLUSIVE RESULTS IN ERITREA, WHICH DEEPENED DILEMMA AND MADE THINGS EVEN MORE DELICATE. WE HOPED TO RESPOND TO ETHIOPIAN REQUEST IN SUCH A WAY AS TO KEEP ALL OUR OPTIONS OPEN. SISCO ADDED THAT IN

CONSIDERING OUR RESPONSE, WE WERE THINKING ALONG SAME
LINES AS GOI.

6. SISCO CONCLUDED BY SUGGESTING THAT ITALIAN EMBASSY IN
ADDIS KEEP IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH OUR EMBASSY THERE.

7. WOULD APPRECIATE EMBASSY'S FURTHER ASSESSMENT OF
PRESENT SITUATION IN ADDIS, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO
ABOVE-EXPRESSED ITALIAN CONCERNS AS WELL AS SUBSTANCE
REFTEL. HAS SITUATION IN ETHIOPIA TAKEN DECIDED TURN FOR
WORSE? IF SO, WHAT SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS DOES EMBASSY
HAVE IN MIND AS TO ANY ACTIONS WHICH OUGHT TO BE TAKEN
EITHER ON SPOT OR IN WASHINGTON? YOUR RESPONSE WOULD BE
HELPFUL BEFORE WE INITIATE ANY DISCUSSIONS WITH BRITISH,
FRENCH AND PROBABLY ITALIANS. KISSINGER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: EMERGENCY EVACUATION, COMBAT OPERATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 FEB 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: buchandr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975STATE040666
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: MR COOTE:CHG
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750064-0091
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750221/aaaaasho.tel
Line Count: 130
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 75 ADDIS ABABA 2121
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: buchandr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <21 MAY 2003 by ifshinsr>; APPROVED <07 OCT 2003 by buchandr>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ITALIAN CONCERN RE DETERIORATING SITUATION IN ETHIOPIA
TAGS: PFOR, AEMR, PINS, ET, IT
To: ADDIS ABABA
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006